

# **ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY STANDARDS OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT BY IN-HOUSE JOB COACHES AND EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES**

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**ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY STANDARDS OF  
SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT BY  
IN-HOUSE JOB COACHES AND  
EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES**

by

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WHO	World Health Organization
SPOKU	<i>Sistem Penempatan Orang Kurang Upaya</i>
SEN	Special Educational Needs
MoE	Ministry of Education
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
ISM	Institut Social Malaysia
IPS	Individual Placement and Support
JCSP	Job Coach Service Program
EUSE	European Union of Supported Employment
QSFM	Quality Standards Framework for Supported Employment in Malaysia
QSE	Quality Supported Employment Instrument
ESP	Employment Support Plan
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
JCNM	Job Coach Network Malaysia
JCSP	Job Coach Service Programme
HRDF	Human Resources Development Fund

# **PENILAIAN STANDARD KUALITI SOKONGAN PEKERJAAN OLEH JURULATIH PEKERJAAN DALAMAN DAN PEKERJA KURANG UPAYA**

## **ABSTRAK**

Standard kualiti sokongan pekerjaan wujud di negara-negara maju untuk individu bermasalah pembelajaran. Walaubagaimanapun, di Malaysia, masih tidak terdapat penilaian standard kualiti sejak sokongan pekerjaan dimulakan 10 tahun yang lalu. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk membuat penilaian standard kualiti sokongan pekerjaan oleh jurulatih pekerjaan dalaman dan pekerja kurang upaya, berdasarkan model kualiti sokongan pekerjaan di Malaysia. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji standard kualiti daripada tiga dimensi iaitu dimensi organisasi, perkhidmatan jurulatih pekerjaan dan hasil perkhidmatan. Peramal hasil sokongan pekerjaan dijuga dikenalpasti. Korelasi penilaian di antara jurulatih serta pekerja kurang upaya juga dikaji. Kajian mengenai standard kualiti sokongan pekerjaan telah dilaksanakan di organisasi yang mempunyai jurulatih pekerjaan dalaman dan pekerja kurang upaya. Reka bentuk kajian ini adalah campuran kaedah kuantitatif dan kualitatif yang digunakan untuk mengumpul data daripada 16 syarikat yang menyediakan khidmat jurulatih pekerjaan dalaman dan memberi peluang pekerjaan kepada pekerja kurang upaya. Sampel kajian ini melibatkan 173 jurulatih pekerjaan dalaman dan 173 pekerja kurang upaya. Kerangka Standard Kualiti Sokongan Pekerjaan Malaysia dioperasikan ke dalam Instrumen Sokongan Pekerjaan Berkualiti untuk penilaian ini. Hasil analisis kajian ini mendapati bahawa standard kualiti sokongan pekerjaan adalah baik. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa peramal hasil sokongan berkualiti adalah pengurusan dan kepimpinan organisasi, perkhidmatan sokongan intensif di tempat kerja dan tindakan susulan. Umur dan pengalaman jurulatih pekerjaan dalaman adalah peramal hasil sokongan berkualiti. Hasil analisis kajian juga mendapati bahawa terdapat korelasi

positif di antara penilaian standard kualiti *Perkembangan Kerjaya* oleh jurulatih pekerjaan dalaman dan pekerja kurang upaya. Implikasi untuk polisi dan amalan di Malaysia termasuk mengintegrasikan jurulatih pekerjaan di dalam syarikat dan menggunakan elemen kerangka standard sokongan pekerjaan berkualiti untuk latihan vokasional di sekolah.

**ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY STANDARDS OF SUPPORTED  
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**ABSTRACT**

Quality standards of supported employment are established for individuals with disabilities in many developed countries. In Malaysia, however, there is still no assessment of quality standards since the beginning of supported employment 10 years ago. The purpose of this study is to assess the quality standards of supported employment by in-house job coaches and employees with disabilities based on a developed model of quality supported employment in Malaysia. The objectives are to assess quality standards from three key dimensions which are organization, job coach service and outcomes. Furthermore, the predictors of outcomes are identified. The correlations in the assessment between job coach and employee with disabilities are identified. A mixed method research design which includes primarily quantitative research methods as well as qualitative research methods was utilized to collect data from 16 companies which provides in-house job coaching services and employment to employees with disabilities. The sample of the study includes 173 in-house job coaches and 173 employees with disabilities. A Quality Standards Framework for Supported Employment in Malaysia (QSFM) was operationalized into the Quality Supported Employment (QSE) Instrument for the purpose of the assessment. The results of the study indicated that the organizations surveyed were of the view that the quality standards of supported employment were good. Findings also included predictors of quality outcomes of supported employment which were the management and leadership of the organization, the intensive support at the workplace and follow-up services. Age and experience of in-house job coaches predicts the quality outcomes of supported



employment. Findings also indicated a positive correlation between the assessment of *Career Development* quality standard by in-house job coaches and employees with disabilities. The implications for policy and practice for Malaysia includes integrating the job coach in companies and incorporating elements of the QSFM for vocational training in schools.

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Upon the completion of education in school, securing employment becomes the next important milestone in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Employment in adulthood provides an opportunity to be independent and to have a better quality of life. The provision of quality supported employment through job coaching plays an important role in enabling individuals with disabilities to achieve meaningful employment.

Supported employment is a practical approach to achieve better job opportunities and sustainability in employment (Ogawa, Sakai, Yeo & Kuno, 2012; Wehman & Revell, 2005). The development of supported employment in Malaysia is an important step towards the inclusion of individuals with disabilities who has previously lacked the necessary support for employment in the open labour market as they were confined to sheltered workshops. The provision of employment supports by job coaches is important for employment.

Finding sustainable employment options for individuals with special needs is a challenge as the workplace environment may not be able to provide adequate support at the earlier stage of entry into employment as well as in the long term for sustainable employment. The challenges include difficulties obtaining and sustaining employment in the open labour market due to lack of support. Individuals with disabilities also face challenges during on-the-job training to acquire skills necessary to perform the job successfully (Kregel, 1997; Ogawa et al.,

2012). Supported employment meets these challenges by equipping both the employer as well as the employee with disability by providing the necessary support and guidance. Supported employment is a paradigm shift from the sheltered employment model in which individuals with disabilities are placed in segregated workshops to a more inclusive open employment setting.

The way forward for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in Malaysia is through the provision of quality supported employment. Therefore, it would be necessary to assess the quality indicators of supported employment by in-house job coaches and employees with disabilities, benchmarking on international quality standards to further enhance and develop the supported employment model.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the percentage of individuals with disabilities in a World Health Survey is 4.5% out of the total population of 25,541.5 ('000) in Malaysia (World Health Organization, 2011). As the total population of Malaysia in 2015 is 30,995.7('000), based on the WHO statistics, an estimate of 4.5% of that total population is 1,390,500 number of individuals with disabilities (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2015).

Currently, the registration of persons with disabilities is 335,217 which is relatively low compared to the estimated population of 1.3 million individuals with disabilities (Department of Social Welfare, 2015a). The registration by category of disability is listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1  
*Registration of persons with disabilities with the Department of Social Welfare*

Category of disabilities	No. of persons with disabilities
Learning Disabilities	120,103
Physical Disabilities	113,976
Hearing Disabilities	27,983
Visual Disabilities	29,919
Multiple Disabilities	15,387
Mental (Psychosocial) Disabilities	26,219
Speech Disabilities	1,630
Total	335,217

Source: Department of Social Welfare (2015a)

Statistics on the employment of persons with disabilities is available through the the *Sistem Penempatan Orang Kurang Upaya* (SPOKU), an online job placement system for persons with disabilities set up in 2000 by the Ministry of Human Resources. Since 2000, SPOKU has played its role in the provision of job placement in the open labour market for individuals with disabilities. The statistical record shows that 264 individuals with disabilities have been placed in employment in 2000 and the numbers has increased to 538 in 2009 (Department of Labour Peninsular Malaysia, 2009).

The statistical record was updated only until 2009 by the Department of Labour Peninsular Malaysia because of the shift in focus towards supported employment from the online job placement system. The time series data of job placement of individuals with disabilities through SPOKU is shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2  
*Job placement of individuals with disabilities registered in SPOKU 2000-2009*

Type of disability	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Visual impairment	24	36	36	83	21	7	2	0	0	0	209
Hearing impairment	119	153	150	125	139	240	243	75	112	184	1540
Physical impairment	101	272	189	222	150	166	185	153	185	244	1867
Others	20	43	49	34	15	69	144	44	71	110	599
Total	264	504	424	464	325	482	574	272	368	538	4215

Source: Department of Labour Peninsular Malaysia (2009)

The issue of low employment rates among persons with disabilities in proportion to the estimated population of persons with disabilities in Malaysia is a cause for concern. Job placement as recorded in this online registration system for individuals with learning disabilities is limited, and only a minimal increase is indicated through time. One of the factors for the minimal increase can be attributed to the lack of necessary support for individuals with disabilities to have sustainable employment.

### 1.2.1 Policies for employment of Persons with Disabilities in Malaysia

While the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector is low, the employment of individuals with disabilities in the public sector has seen an improvement since the Service Circular No 3 of 2008 has been initiated to implement the 1% Policy on Employment Opportunities for persons with disabilities in the public sector (Rezaul Islam, 2015). There are currently 3,741 or 0.22% employees with disabilities from the 1,667,055 total employees in Government Agencies (Yeo, 2015a).

Policies like the General Order (PP 10/1988) that advocates and allots 1% of civil service positions to persons with disabilities are policy statements which requires further implementation to achieve its target (Rezaul Islam, 2015). Recognizing the need for more employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, there was a proposed policy implementation of 1% employment opportunity for Disabled Persons in the private sector in a discussion between the Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of the Development of Women, Community and Family (Department of Social Welfare, 2014).

In 2017, there are 79,836 students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) enrolled in the Ministry of Education's (MoE) education system (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017). In 2018, approximately ten thousand students will complete their education and need to transition to employment. In the previous years, individuals with disabilities who face challenges securing employment in the open labour market have found employment in sheltered workshops, such as *Bengkel Daya* (Sheltered Workshops) and Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) workshops. These centers are provided by the Department of Social Welfare and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) as avenues where individuals with disabilities can go to for learning vocational skills and to find employment.

There are also centers which are set up by parents of persons with disabilities and social workers which provide training and employment. The centers utilise the sheltered workshop concept in which the employees are undergoing training or employed in a segregated setting and with minimal pay (Chu, 2011). Employment of individuals with disabilities in sheltered workshops are shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3  
*Employment in sheltered workshops*

Center	Types of Employment	Number of employees	In operation (Years)
Community-based Rehabilitation	Handicraft, sewing	3	5
NGO A	Handicraft, sewing, namecard printing service, bakery, art gallery	20	9
NGO B	Batik painting, weaving, recycle, bakery, pottery	22	10
NGO C	Packaging, laundry	41	13
<i>Bengkel Daya</i> (Sheltered Workshops)	Bakery, sewing, handicraft, assembling	14	33

Source: Chu (2011)

There is a paradigm shift from sheltered to supported employment as the sheltered workshop is based on the medical model of disability which focuses on the disability of the individual and segregated training institutions. The paradigm shift revolves through the social model of disability which emphasizes on the abilities of the individual and the removal of the barriers in the environment by provision of supports (Carr, Darke & Kuno, 2008).

A supported employment program that is currently being practised in Malaysia is the Job Coach program. The Job Coach program provides supported employment to individuals with disabilities through job coaches at the workplace to help remove the barriers in employment (Ogawa et al., 2012).

Internationally, there is an increasing emphasis on supporting individuals with disabilities into employment in the open labour market which corresponds with a decrease in the traditional approach of sheltered workshops (Wehman & Revell,

1996; Wilson, 2003, United Nations, 2012). In 2008, Malaysia has ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which promotes the rights of persons with disabilities in achieving sustainable employment (United Nations, 2008).

Malaysia is also a signatory member of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action which supports the promotion of employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment (United Nations, 2003). In 2012, Malaysia was among the Governments of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) region which adopted the Ministerial Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, and the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2012).

The Incheon Strategy provides the first set of regionally agreed disability-inclusive development goals to track progress towards improving the quality of life and the fulfilment of the rights, of the region’s 650 million persons with disabilities. The Incheon Strategy builds on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2012).

The Incheon Strategy Goal No. 1 is to “Reduce poverty and enhance work and employment prospects” with the following targets:

Target 1.A Eliminate extreme poverty among persons with disabilities

Target 1.B Increase work and employment for persons of working age with disabilities who can and want to work



Target 1.C Increase the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational training and other employment-support programmes funded by governments (UNESCAP, 2012)

Malaysia has also passed the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2008 (Act 685) which states in Section 29(1) “Persons with disabilities shall have the right to access to employment on equal basis with persons without disabilities”. The Act stipulates accessibility of employment in the open labour market so that individuals with disabilities have equal rights to employment.

### **1.2.2 Job Coach Training**

In accordance with the international and local mandates, the Government of Malaysia has supported the provision of supported employment through the Job Coach Service Program. The Social Welfare Department has collaborated with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to conduct Job Coach training. The Social Welfare Department has encouraged officers to attend Job Coach Training of Trainers course conducted in Japan under the Japan International Cooperation Agency in 2010 (Abdullah, See, Tan, Rosly Othman & Ahmad Fairuz Omar, 2013).

Following which, courses on Job Coaching is conducted at the Institut Social Malaysia (ISM) for 23 participants (Department of Social Welfare, 2010). The government began the initiative to train job coaches in 2006 with the assistance of Japan International Cooperation Agency. While there are a small number of trained job coaches in the country, it is still far from meeting the national needs (Abdullah et al., 2013).

In 2013, the Department of Labour Peninsular Malaysia with other Ministries and Government Agencies promoted the employment of persons with

disabilities to the private sector to ensure that persons with disabilities have job opportunities for the socioeconomic development of the country. As part of the initiative to develop the employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, the Department of Human Resources has conducted the Job Coach Basic Training Course for four times in 2013, twice for the officials in the Department of Human Resources and another two times for the employers in the private sector (Department of Labour Peninsular Malaysia, 2013).

In 2013, 895 individuals who are Social Welfare Officers, Community-Based Rehabilitation personnel, special education teachers and hospital personnel has been trained in Job Coaching to support individuals with disabilities to work. Furthermore, the Social Welfare Department also provided Job Coach training to employers and individuals from the private sector to equip them to be in-house Job Coaches for supporting the employment of persons with disabilities (Department of Social Welfare, 2013).

The statistics of companies with in-house job coaches was updated only until 2013 with no subsequent records according to the Department of Social Welfare Annual Reports of 2014 and 2015 reviewed by the researcher. The list of companies which has participated in the Job Coach training and the number of individuals with disabilities who have been employed are listed in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 indicates that there are companies which provide employment to individuals with disabilities after attending job coach training. There are companies from different sectors of employment such as the hospitality industry, the retail companies, restaurants, manufacturing, technology services providers as well as insurance companies.

Table 1.4  
*Companies with in-house job coaches and employees with disabilities*

Companies	Number of Company Personnel Attended Job Coach Training	Number of Persons with Disabilities Employed in Company
Intercontinental Hotel	5	9
Shangri La Hotels	2	68
GCH (M) Sdn Bhd	11	156
QSR Holdings (KFC)	19	155
Mydin Holdings	84	113
Classita (M) Sdn Bhd	4	18
Jebco (M) Sdn Bhd	4	9
OMRON(M) Sdn Bhd	6	8
Sony Sdn Bhd	1	6
The Chicken Rice Shop	3	5
Equatorial Hotel	4	2
AEON Co(M) Sdn Bhd	4	30
TESCO Stores	4	40
McDonalds	2	50
Holiday Inn Glenmarie	3	1
Parkson Malaysia	3	5
IBM Malaysia	3	1
VADs Bhd Malaysia	3	30
Prince Hotel KL	3	2
Great Eastern Life	2	3
Dominant Opto Technologies	2	12
Total	170	717

Source: Department of Social Welfare Malaysia (2013)

Staffs from the companies listed who attended the job coach training are qualified as in-house job coaches for the persons with disabilities who are and will be employed in the companies. The job coach program has resulted in more employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities such as in Giant Hypermarket which has employed 156 individuals with disabilities, Mydin Holdings with 113 employees with disabilities and Shangri La hotel has 68 employees with disabilities (Department of Social Welfare, 2013).

This data indicated that Job Coaching as a new concept in supported employment in Malaysia, This has lead to an increase in the employment rates of individuals with disabilities in the various industry sectors. Employers who have utilised job coach services to provide supported employment to individuals with disabilities has benefited 717 individuals with disabilities (Department of Social Welfare, 2013).

Based on the statistics, there is an increase in employment because of supported employment, therefore this is an important area that needs to be studied for transition from school to employment. There are more individuals with disabilities in supported employment in the Central Region of Malaysia, predominantly Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. There are 96 persons with disabilities who have secured employment in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and 86 persons with disabilities in Selangor Darul Ehsan followed by 39 persons with disabilities who have secured employment through job coaches in Kelantan Darul Iman (Yeo, 2015a). Table 1.5 indicates the regions in Malaysia and the corresponding states which has employees with disabilities in supported employment.

Table 1.5  
*Persons with disabilities in supported employment by states*

Region	States in Malaysia	Number of employees with disabilities in supported employment
Northern	Perlis	4
	Kedah	10
	Penang	12
	Perak	9
Central	Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur	86
	Selangor	96
	Negeri Sembilan	5
Southern	Melaka	31
	Johor	33
East Coast	Kelantan	39
	Pahang	12
	Terengganu	0
Sabah	Sabah	12
Sarawak	Sarawak	24
Total		373

Based on Table 1.5, the statistics show that supported employment provided by job coaches is promising, however the rate of employment is still low as compared to the total number of individuals with disabilities and the majority is confined to the central region in Malaysia. The southern region of Malaysia which includes Melaka and Johor has 31 and 33 employee with disabilities in supported employment. The states in the northern region, Perlis, Kedah, Penang and Perak has a total of 35 employees with disabilities. The state of Kelantan and Pahang in the east coast has 39 and 12 employees with disabilities respectively. Sabah and Sarawak has a total of 36 employees with disabilities in supported employment.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The statement of the problem systematically discuss the problems in supported employment as a result of one cohesive issue, which is the the absence of quality standards assessment. There is a lack of quality standards assessment of the job coach service, organization and outcomes of supported employment in Malaysia.

Low employment rates among persons with disabilities in Malaysia is evident in the available statistics of the *Sistem Penempatan Orang Kurang Upaya* (SPOKU) from the Department of Labour Peninsular Malaysia. While the government has developed policies and systems to promote the employment of persons with disabilities, limited headway has been made as the challenges surmount the available facilities. The introduction of the job coaching service for supported employment of persons with disabilities has indicated some promise. Past research has shown that individuals with disabilities require support for successful employment (Loh & Sharifah Zainiyah, 2013; Trach & Mayhall, 1997; Wan Abdullah, 2013; Wehman, Revell & Kregel, 1998).

Since the its inception in 2007, the Annual Reports from the Social Welfare Department and the Department of Labour shows that persons with disabilities have achieved sustainable employment in large groups in various companies in Malaysia that has utilized the job coaching services (Department of Social Welfare, 2013). Therefore, now is a good time to study to what extent is the quality of supported employment in Malaysia.

Past research has been conducted on employers' perspective of supported employment in companies in Malaysia (Pang, 2013; Tiun, Lee & Khoo, 2011; Wan Abdullah, 2013). However, there has been no study conducted on assessment of the quality standard of supported employment in Malaysia. Even though job coaching is

promising as the way forward for the development of sustainable employment opportunities in Malaysia, however, as yet there has been no assessment of the quality of job coaching services in supported employment implementation. Currently, there is a research gap on assessment of quality standards of supported employment by in-house job coaches and employees with disabilities in Malaysia. In-house job coach model is unique, new not only in Malaysia but internationally. However, there has been no research on the quality outcomes of this model and the demographic characteristics of the in-house job coaches and employees with disabilities in this model. Quality outcomes have been shown in research literature to be an important aspect of supported employment (Chan et al., 2016). However, in Malaysia, there has yet to be any study on this particular aspect of supported employment.

International quality standards of supported employment are usually assessed through quality indicators in the organization and the job coach service dimensions (Brooke, Revell, & Wehman, 2009; Verdugo, Jordán de Urríes & Vicent, 2009). Through this assessment exercise, data on the indicators which enable quality of supported employment in Malaysia will be identified.

Past research in Malaysia has gathered qualitative data in school settings on successful transition of persons with disabilities, employer's perspectives and job satisfaction among persons with disabilities (Loh & Sharifah Zainiyah, 2013; Pang, 2013; Tiun, Lee & Khoo, 2011; Wan Abdullah, 2013). However, it is important to get data from in-house job coaches in actual practice and employees with disabilities who are currently being supported in employment. This is due to the reason that data from such authentic sources will provide accurate evidence on the quality implementation of supported employment. Gathering data from these sources will

contribute towards new knowledge and understanding of provision of quality supported employment. Research on the voices of persons with disabilities who are the key informants pertaining to services which are targeted for them is important because there is insufficient research in this area (Wan Abdullah, 2013).

Supported employment begun since 2007 in Malaysia through the implementation job coaching as a strategy for employment for persons with disabilities (Yeo, 2015b). After almost a decade since its introduction, it timely to assess the quality standard of supported employment by job coaches and persons with disabilities in Malaysia benchmarking on the European Quality Standard.

Social inclusion of persons with disabilities is often sought through employment. However, the quality of supported employment, taking into account the relationships between organization, the job coach service and the outcomes dimension, has not been explored. Past research has conducted other assessments of the employees' skills and qualifications of job coaches (Chan et al., 2016). However, the three dimensions of the organizations, job coach service and outcomes have not been assessed concurrently. The organization dimension has not been investigated for the delivery of quality supported employment outcomes. Likewise, the job coach service dimension has yet to be assessed. There is a knowledge gap on the aspects of the organization and the job coach service which determine quality outcomes in Malaysia. The quality standards of supported employment, and how it is perceived by the employees with disabilities receiving the support and the job coaches providing the support, are critical. This study begins to explore the three dimensions simultaneously and its interrelationships that contribute to quality supported employment outcomes.



#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to assess supported employment in Malaysia based on a developed model of Quality Standards Framework of Supported Employment in Malaysia (QSFM), which encapsulates the in-house job coach model of supported employment. The assessment of the quality standards of supported employment is from the perspectives of in-house job coaches and employees with disabilities from three key dimensions, which are the organization, job coach service and the outcomes of supported employment.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are:

1) To assess the quality standards of supported employment from the perspective of in-house job coaches in terms of:

- a) Overall Dimension (a combination of the organization, job coach service and outcomes dimension)
- b) Organization dimension
- c) Job coach service dimension
- d) Outcomes dimension
- e) Predictors of outcomes dimension

2) To assess the quality standards of supported employment from the perspective of employees with disabilities in terms of:

- a) Overall dimension (a combination of the organization, job coach service and outcomes dimension)
- b) Organization dimension
- c) Job coach service dimension

d) Outcomes dimension

e) Predictors of outcomes dimension

3) To determine the correlations of quality standards of supported employment between in-house job coaches and employees with disabilities.

4) To identify the demographic characteristics (Age, years of job coaching service, employment sector, level of education) of in-house job coaches that predicts quality standards of supported employment.

5) To identify the demographic characteristics (Age, years of job coaching service, employment sector, level of education) of employees with disabilities that predicts quality standards of supported employment.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

Based on the research objectives, the research questions of the study are as follows:

1) To what extent is the quality standard of supported employment from the perspective of in-house job coaches in terms of:

a) Overall Dimension (a combination of the organization, job coach service and outcomes dimension)

b) Organization dimension

c) Job coach service dimension

d) Outcomes dimension

e) Predictors of outcomes dimension

2) To what extent is the quality standard of supported employment from the perspective of employees with disabilities in terms of:

a) Overall Dimension (a combination of the organization, job coach service and outcomes dimension)

- b) Organization dimension
- c) Job coach service dimension
- d) Outcomes dimension
- e) Predictors of outcomes dimension

3) Are there any correlations in the assessment of quality standards of supported employment from the perspective of in-house job coaches and employees with disabilities?

4) Which demographic variables (Age, years of job coaching service, employment sector, level of education) of in-house job coaches significantly predicts supported employment quality outcomes?

5) Which demographic variables (Age, category of disability, employment sector, level of education) of employees with disabilities significantly predicts supported employment quality outcomes?

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The expected outcome of the study is the development of a model of quality supported employment in Malaysia through the synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data from the assessment of quality supported employment indicators by job coaches and persons with disabilities. This model is important for the creation of a blueprint for the successful implementation of supported employment to improve employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Therefore this model will benefit both the Ministry of Education (MOE) as well as non-government organizations (NGO) with supported employment programs for the inclusion, transition, sustainable employment and vocational outcomes.

The supported employment model is authorized as a proper vocational outcome for students with disabilities in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments 1992 in the United States (Brolin, 1995). Therefore, this study would lead to better vocational outcomes for individuals with disabilities in Malaysia which include persons with autism spectrum disorders, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), intellectual disabilities and others.

The research will also contribute towards gainful employment of the students through quality supported employment, which will result in their inclusion in society. Therefore there will be a reduction in the negative social and economic impact of their disability on the society and the government. The individuals with disabilities will be able to increase their independence as the rate of employment reduces their dependence on society and the government. Furthermore, this study can provide an in-depth understanding of the process of supported employment of individuals with disabilities, which will contribute towards the creation of a mechanism in operating quality supported employment programs.

In addition, another outcome of this research will be a mechanism for the assessment and the monitoring of supported employment which can help to enhance the quality of supported employment services. A clear operational mechanism will not only benefit the MOE and NGOs who are providing supports, but will encourage more companies to be positive towards such programs. Contribution of the research to the nation of Malaysia is towards the effective transition from school to employment of individuals with disabilities. This is in line with Malaysia's Education Blueprint 2013-2025 which states that the Ministry will develop a transition programme to support individuals with special needs in entering the

workplace (Ministry of Education, 2013). The model of supported employment will enable more effective transition programmes to be implemented.

A larger population of individuals with disabilities can be successfully employed in the private and public sector to contribute to the Nation's economic growth in human resource development as supported employment services improve through better knowledge and understanding about quality standards. Individuals with disabilities are a valuable part of the nation's workforce which contribute to the local economies significantly through their earnings and payment of taxes. This research will contribute towards the policy of hiring 1% of employees with disabilities from the total workforce in the public or private sector (Jayasooria, 2000). Supported employment helps in the job retention of individuals with disabilities and enables a better quality of life through meaningful and sustainable employment. This research contributes towards better social welfare through sustainable employment in conjunction with the initiatives of the Department of Social Welfare in training job coaches for supported employment. This study will also contribute towards the inclusion and career advancement of individuals with disabilities. This study will lead to better understanding of the quality indicators which are significant in enabling inclusion and career advancement for individuals with disabilities.

Finally, this study will provide input for the improvement of vocational transition training of individuals with disabilities. Currently, such training are provided at secondary schools with integrated programmes for students with disabilities, and at specialised vocational training schools. In addition, the results will also contribute towards the improvement of formal vocational courses offered at community colleges for post-secondary individuals with disabilities.

## **1.8 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

The whole population of 173 in-house job coaches is used as respondents for this study. The limitation of this study is that the population of in-house job coaches in Malaysia is still limited in number. Therefore, the survey of in-house job coaches are limited to only 173 in-house job coaches.

In addition, the employees with disabilities are limited to those in the neurodevelopmental category. Persons with disabilities with visual impairment and hearing impairment are not included as those two categories of disabilities have different needs compared to those with neurodevelopmental disabilities.

## **1.9 Operational Definitions**

### **1.9.1 Supported Employment and In-house Job Coach**

Definition of supported employment from literature can be derived from the legislation and past researches. Definition by law in the United States, The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 (P.L. 102-569) defines supported employment with three main criteria:

- a) Competitive work in integrated work environments for individuals with the most significant disabilities;
- b) Specifically for individuals for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or has been interrupted or intermittent because of significant disability;
- c) Provides ongoing support services at and/or away from the workplace as required for the supported employee to have successful job retention (Wehman & Revell, 1996).

Past researchers have also defined supported employment. Wehman, Revell and Kregel (1998) noted that supported employment is one program specifically designed to assist individuals with most significant disabilities to achieve competitive level, community integrated employment. By the assistance of employment specialists, mentors, coworkers and employers, the abilities and work potentials are emphasized through supports designed in the workplace. Hallahan and Kauffman (2000) describes supported competitive employment as employment that the employees receive at least a minimum wage in integrated work settings in which most of the workers are not disabled.

In this study, supported employment is operationally defined as the Job Coach Service Program which is a supported employment program implemented by the Department of Social Welfare in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency. The job coaches were trained by the Department of Social Welfare to provide job coach services in the Job Coach Service Program.

The operational definition of this study is based the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, adapted in Malaysia by Ogawa, Sakai, Yeo and Kuno (2012) which provides job coach training to companies, government officers and social workers. The main characteristic of the IPS model is individualized and intensive supports of the employee with disabilities provided by a job coach at the workplace. The model of supported employment utilised in Malaysia is the individual placement and support (IPS) model through the training of job coaches in companies. Supported employment is “Paid employment with on-going support in integrated work site” (Ogawa, Sakai, Yeo & Kuno, 2012).

The operational definition of supported employment in this study includes the process of assessment of persons with disabilities, assessment of workplace, finding a job, job matching, negotiation and consultation, intensive support, natural support, fading and follow-up and developing an employment support plan. Supported employment is implemented in 21 companies in manufacturing, retail, hospitality, restaurant, technology (ICT services) and insurance employment sectors which employ persons with disabilities through provision of supported employment by in-house job coaches.

Hallahan and Kauffman (2000) defines a job coach as a person who provides ongoing assistance to individuals with disabilities to achieve successful employment. The job coach provides vocational assessment, overall planning, on-the-job training, assistance in finding an appropriate job and assistance in the use of transportation.

In addition, the job coach also facilitates social interactions of employees with disabilities with coworkers and employer, as well as collaboration with related government and service agencies. According to Wehman and Revell (2005), one of the publicly funded workplace support strategy for individuals with disabilities is through the job coach who is a “paid professional who works for a limited time at a job site with a person who has special job needs”.

The difference between the traditional job coach and the in-house job coach is that the traditional job coach provides external job coaching services from a supported employment agency to the employee with disability working in the company. On the other hand, the in-house job coach is an internal job coach service provider who is available within the company.



The master trainers of the job coaches in Malaysia have developed their definition of job coach which is:

“A job coach is a key player in Supported Employment. He/She is not a coach in the narrow sense such as a trainer for persons with disabilities. The role of the job coach is to be a bridge or intermediary to connect persons with disabilities and companies by providing support for both throughout the process of employment.” (Ogawa, Sakai, Yeo & Kuno, 2012)

There are two types of job coaches in Malaysia, that is, job coaches which have been trained to be in-house job coaches within companies and job coaches who are based in voluntary non-governmental organizations, government agencies and community-based rehabilitation centers (Yeo, 2015a). In-house job coaches is an approach which is unique to Malaysia. Research studies have been conducted on Supported Employment Agencies which provide job coaches from external parties to companies who are hiring individuals with disabilities (Wehman, 2003), but as yet, no empirical research on the provision of supported employment by in-house job coaches has been found.

The operational definition of job coaches for this study is based on the definition of job coach used by trainers, special education experts and researchers (Ogawa et al., 2013, Hallahan & Kaufmann, 2000, & Wehman, 2003) with the additional aspect that these job coaches are “in-house” job coaches. ‘In-house’ job coaches are employees in companies who have attended job coach training by the Department of Social Welfare. These employees then become in-house job coaches within the companies which employs individuals with disabilities. The companies